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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [OREP](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: SENIOR ANALYST WARNS OF THE DANGER OF IGNORING
RUSSIAN CONCERNS ON NATO AND UKRAINE - MEETING WITH CODEL
DELAHUNT

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Moscow Carnegie Center Director Dmitri Trenin provided an overview of Russia-U.S. relations for visiting Representatives Bill Delahunt and Dana Rohrabacher, explaining that Moscow was troubled by U.S. indifference toward Russian security concerns, and that Washington failed to grasp the problems that would come with pursuing NATO membership for Ukraine. Trenin advised the U.S. to recognize Russian red lines in Ukraine, Georgia, and Central Asia, and hoped that after the Georgian war the West realized that crossing these lines could bring an armed response. He conveyed Moscow's shock over the outbreak of fighting in Georgia, which was seen as an attack made "on behalf of the U.S.;" Russia's response was intended to deter similar U.S. support for future clients. Trenin cautioned that NATO expansion would bring political instability, both in a divided Ukraine and in the West's relations with Russia. He reminded the Congressmen that Russians believed the U.S. promised that NATO expansion would end with East Germany, and advised the West to integrate Ukraine through EU membership. Trenin thought President-Elect Obama would be well served to appoint a "Russia tsar" to engage comprehensively with Moscow. End summary.

U.S. Indifference toward Russia

¶2. (SBU) Moscow Carnegie Center Director Dmitri Trenin told Representatives Bill Delahunt (D, MA) and Dana Rohrabacher (R, CA) on December 8 that the rift between Russia and the U.S. stemmed, in large part, from U.S. indifference towards Russian interests. He told the Congressmen that it was a "sad comment" on the state of bilateral ties when Moscow had to send strategic bombers and naval vessels to the Western Hemisphere in order to send a message to Washington, which did not appear to understand any other language. Trenin advised that the "key to a normal relationship" with Russia was for the U.S. to maintain a "proper attitude" toward the former Soviet space. This required understanding that Russia no longer sought to control its former empire but wanted to "wield influence" in areas considered key to national interests. Russia's priority interests were in Ukraine and Georgia, with secondary interests in Central Asia.

Red Lines Will Trigger an Armed Response

¶3. (SBU) Trenin explained that the war in Georgia "made clear" that Russia's declared red lines were "real" and, if crossed, an armed response could be expected. He warned that Georgia would seem a "sandbox exercise" compared to what could occur should Russia see a threat emanating from Ukraine. The current situation was not similar to the Cold War, but more like 1914 when a minor miscalculation by one side could lead to a serious provocation. Trenin was extremely worried in August, when American warships entered

the Black Sea, which could have led to shooting between the U.S. and Russia. Such a scenario must be avoided in the future.

Georgia: American Client Strikes Russia

¶4. (SBU) Trenin said that the low point in Russia-U.S. relations came on the morning of August 8, when the Russian leadership realized that Georgia had attacked South Ossetia. Both Putin and Medvedev, who were out of Moscow and not expecting a war, "were clearly shocked" by events as they unfolded. While the rest of the world was asking "where will Russia strike next," Trenin maintained that the Russian leadership was asking "who will be the next Saakashvili to strike Russia on behalf of the U.S.?" In attacking Georgia, the Kremlin was "trying to hit at an American client" and deter the U.S. from backing another troublesome regime in the former Soviet Union.

¶5. (SBU) Trenin thought that the danger of a "major war" over Ukraine had been averted for now, thanks, in part, to the international financial crisis, which appeared to have "transported" the Russian leadership's way of thinking from the nineteenth century Great Game back to a twenty-first century focus on economic interconnectedness.

NATO Expansion Brings Instability

¶6. (SBU) Trenin warned that NATO had come to the point where any further movement eastward would not increase security,

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but cause instead political instability. He advised the West to start thinking seriously about how to include Russia in a European security architecture not based upon NATO. Medvedev's proposed European security treaty was Russia's attempt to get a guarantee that its interests would be taken into account by Europe and the U.S.

¶7. (SBU) Trenin explained that Russians believed that the U.S. promised that NATO would not expand after Gorbachev agreed to German unification. Whether or not this promise was actually made, it was important for the West to understand that Russians believed in it and saw continued NATO expansion as testimony to "bad intentions" toward Russia. He stressed that there was a "very wide perception" in Russia of Western "unfaithfulness," which was used by Russian hardliners to demonize the U.S. in order to further their views of how to pursue parochial (and their personal) interests.

¶8. (SBU) Trenin thought that if the West wanted to integrate Ukraine more closely without causing trouble, it should do so through the EU and not NATO. He reiterated that Ukraine was divided on NATO membership, and pursuing this course could cause serious domestic problems for Kyiv. Trenin described Ukraine's relationship with Russia as that of an extended family, in which many Ukrainians "do not want to be a part of Russia, but do not want to part with Russia either."

Advice for President-Elect Obama

¶9. (SBU) Trenin advised the new administration to have a "Russia tsar," someone who had the ear of the President and could engage Moscow in a comprehensive manner. He explained that "despite all the bluster," Russia's top echelon "craved respect" and would see the appointment of such a person as a positive step.

¶10. (U) The delegation has not cleared this cable.
RUBIN